

AMENDMENTS TO THE CLAIMS

1. (original) A method for preparing sautéed onions, wherein said method comprises:
  - (a) cutting at least one cleaned, whole onion to produce onion parts;
  - (b) coating said onion parts with a sautéing agent;
  - (c) sautéing said onion parts by contacting with an amount of heated air at a temperature ranging between about 250° F and about 400° F for between about 6 minutes and about 60 minutes to produce sautéed onion parts; and,
  - (d) treating said sautéed onions, wherein said treatment is selected from the group consisting of freezing, drying, freeze drying, treating with preservatives, and combinations thereof.
2. (original) The method of Claim 1, wherein said onion parts range in size from 1/8-inch cubed pieces to slices.
3. (original) The method of Claim 1, wherein said sautéing agent is selected from the group consisting of lipids and lipid substitutes.
4. (original) The method of Claim 3, wherein said sautéing agent is selected from the group consisting of edible oils, butter, and margarine.
5. (original) The method of Claim 1, wherein said method comprises blanching said onion parts for 60 seconds at a product temperature ranging between about 180° F. and about 190° F. to produce blanched onion parts.

6. (original) The method of Claim 1, wherein said cutting step comprises slicing, dicing, and chopping.

7. (original) The method of Claim 1, wherein said method comprises drying said onion for an additional period of time ranging between 2 hours and 24 hours.

8. (original) The method of Claim 1, wherein said method comprises quick freezing said onion.

9. (original) The method of Claim 1, wherein said method comprises sautéing at an air speed ranging between about 50 cfm/ft<sup>2</sup> and about 250 cfm/ft<sup>2</sup>.

10. (original) The method of Claim 1, wherein said method comprises sautéing for a time ranging between 10 minutes and 30 minutes, with said temperature ranging between about 280° F and about 320° F.

11. (original) A method for preparing sautéed vegetables, wherein said method comprises:

(a) cutting a cleaned, whole vegetable to produce vegetable parts;

(b) coating said vegetable parts with a sautéing agent;

(c) sautéing said vegetable parts by contacting with an amount of heated air at a temperature ranging between about 250° F and about 400° F for between 6 minutes and 60 minutes to produce sautéed vegetable parts; and,

(d) treating said sautéed vegetables, wherein said treatment is selected from the group consisting of freezing, drying, freeze drying, treating with preservatives, and combinations thereof.

12. (original) The method of Claim 11, wherein said method comprises blanching said vegetable parts to produce blanched vegetable parts.

13. (original) The method of Claim 11, wherein said vegetables are selected from the group consisting of onions, garlic, mushrooms and bell peppers.

14. (original) The method of Claim 11, wherein said sautéing agent is selected from the group consisting of lipids and lipid substitutes.

15. (original) The method of Claim 11, wherein said method comprises sautéing at an air speed ranging between about 50 cfm/ft<sup>2</sup> and about 250 cfm/ft<sup>2</sup>.

16. (original) The method of Claim 11, wherein said method comprises sautéing for a time ranging between 10 minutes and 30 minutes, with said temperature ranging between about 280° F and about 320° F.

17. (currently amended) A sautéed onion, wherein said sautéed onion has an amount of total moisture equal to or less than 7% by weight, a portion of some sugars found in said onion are caramelized, said onion ranges in size from 1/8 inch pieces cubed to slices, and a sautéing agent is present, said onion has been blanched, and said onion is frozen.

18. (canceled) ~~The onion of Claim 17, wherein said onion has been blanched.~~

19. (canceled) ~~The onion of Claim 17, wherein said onion is frozen.~~

20. (currently amended) A sautéed vegetable, wherein said sautéed vegetable has an amount of total moisture equal to or less than 7% by weight, a portion of some sugars found in said vegetable are caramelized, said vegetable ranges in size from 1/8 inch pieces cubed to slices, ~~and a sautéing agent is present,~~ and said vegetable is frozen.

21. (original) A method for preparing sautéed vegetables, wherein said method comprises:

(a) coating an amount of vegetable parts with a sautéing agent; and,

(b) sautéing said vegetable parts by contacting with an amount of heated air at a temperature ranging between about 250° F and about 400° F for between about 6 minutes and about 60 minutes to produce sautéed vegetable parts.